

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS ABUJA 000016

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

LONDON FOR GURNEY  
PARIS FOR NEARY

E.O.12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: PDP NATIONAL CONVENTION SELECTS OBASANJO

REF: (A) Abuja 0015  
- (B) Abuja 0008

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY.

1. (U) In a repeat of the ruling PDP's 1999 convention, Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo defeated Alex Ekwueme to become its presidential candidate, receiving 2,642 of an estimated 3,579 votes cast (74 percent) in the first round. The former Vice President came in a distant second with 661 votes. Second Republic Kano State Governor Abubakar Rimi trailed with 159, and former PDP national Chairman Barnabas Gemade brought up the rear with 17.

2. (SBU) However, the final tally did not reflect the pre-voting tension. Compared with the anxious excitement of Friday and Saturday, the actual gathering of the delegates at Eagle square and the voting were anti-climatic. The atmosphere was subdued, having none of the electricity usually associated with a hard-fought convention. This could be partially attributed to the exhaustion of the delegates and contestants; many had had only a few hours of sleep the last several nights. However, the primary reason for this languor was that, although the nomination had been hard fought, the battle did not continue to the convention floor. By this morning, most of the errant governors had been pulled back into the fold and Atiku, perhaps tempted, never really strayed. Despite the suspense of the last two days, the final results reflected what we predicted before the convention. Despite the unpopularity of the President among the delegates, the power of incumbency and control of the party machinery ultimately proved decisive. Still Obasanjo was forced to politick and was perhaps given a preview of how tough the general election might be.

3. (SBU) Because the voting had turned into a virtual no-contest, the process ended with a first round victory. However, balloting consumed almost ten hours and was followed by a tedious five-hour vote count. The final announcement of Obasanjo's victory echoed across a nearly empty Eagle Square, with almost none of the state delegates still around. About two hundred of Obasanjo's staff and supporters were on hand for the announcement, along with the remnants of a special 3,200-person security presence and a few vendors looking to sell their wares.

4. (U) Note: Press reports give the delegate count as 3,349; late additions and accreditation irregularities likely account for the difference, and then some. A few state delegations were smaller than reported (e.g., Abia had 95 delegates instead of 100), so the total delegates added on Friday and Saturday probably exceeded 230. Even if 250 fewer delegates committed to Obasanjo had been present (3329 instead of 3579 total delegates), Obasanjo would have polled 2392 and achieved an easy first-round victory.

JETER